

Written Testimony of Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon
House Armed Services Committee Member Day
May 16, 2023

Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, thank you for the opportunity to share my priorities for the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. I write today to respectfully request your committee's support for the CH-47F Block II program and the V-22, as well as our nation's civilian federal firefighters at military installations.

I proudly represent Pennsylvania's 5th District, which is home to the production facilities of the CH-47 Chinook and V-22 Osprey, and to many of the hardworking men and women who build these world class platforms for our Armed Services. The Ridley Park production facility is a critical regional economic engine and a foundational part of the nation's defense industrial base. The facility employs over 4,000 people in Southeastern Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. Across Pennsylvania, these production programs support nearly 6,000 jobs across 36 suppliers, and nationally, this production supports more than 20,000 jobs across 38 states.

As you know, the Army is in the process of modernizing its vertical lift fleet to meet the national security challenges of the future. While the Future Vertical Lift program is ongoing, there is no heavy lift modernization program to replace the Chinook. The Army's continued inaction on a path forward for heavy lift modernization is creating acute short- and long-term risks for the warfighter and the rotorcraft industrial base. By not committing to the Block II modernization program, the Army is forgoing cost effective, currently available upgrades that allow the Chinook to meet the Army's stated heavy lift modernization requirements. By the Army's own analysis, Block II would save the Army nearly \$3 billion compared to a new build program.

The outcomes of the Future Vertical Lift modernization program will have major, long-lasting effects on the nation's defense industrial base, and we are already seeing this in the Army's decision on the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft. This decision, combined with the interruption of the Block II program, the completion of the services' programs of record for the V-22 Osprey, and the winding down of production for other legacy aircraft platforms, threatens the health of the rotorcraft industrial base and the nation's ability to produce the aircraft that the Army needs. For any vertical lift modernization plan to be successful, the Army will need to maintain the skilled workforces, production facilities, and supplier networks that currently exist.

Currently, thousands of skilled labor jobs are at risk across Boeing and through the Chinook and Osprey's national supplier bases. Due to reduced build rates, the Ridley Park facility has endured three rounds of layoffs, and while forthcoming foreign sales are promising, a long-term commitment is needed from the Army to preserve this necessary part of the defense industrial base.

Over the past four fiscal years, Congress has intervened to support the CH-47F Block II modernization program as the Army reevaluates its position. I am incredibly thankful for your committee's support so far, and I respectfully ask that you continue to support the Block II program in Fiscal Year 2024 by authorizing an additional \$177.5 million to procure CH-47F Block II aircraft and \$22.5 million for advanced procurement of essential long-lead items.

I also ask that you consider authorizing funding to procure additional V-22 aircraft to support the Navy's future needs and the tiltrotor industrial base. The V-22 is the only tiltrotor in the Department of Defense inventory and will remain in high demand throughout the world until at least the mid-2050s. In February 2022, the Navy announced initial operational capability for its variant, the CMV-22, confirming the platform's operational readiness following the successful completion of its maiden deployment performing the carrier-on-board delivery mission. The CMV-22 provides increased operational range, faster cargo loading and unloading, enhanced survivability, and it is the only aircraft that can support the F-35C engine for the carrier. Through tremendous support from your committee, the services' procurement requirement has been met, though evidence is building for the need for additional CMV-22s to support future contested logistics conditions.

Additionally, I want to thank you for including my bill, the Federal Firefighters Workforce Support Act, in the FY23 NDAA. Section 388 of the FY23 NDAA requires the services to meet nationally recognized staffing standards for fire protection services at military installations. I have heard countless stories from federal civilian firefighters in my district and from across the country about the severe toll of chronic understaffing at our DOD firehouses. These brave men and women, who protect the lives of our servicemembers and billions of dollars of military property, are grossly overworked and underpaid, largely due to budget and staffing decisions by the services. I hope to continue working with your committee to follow up on the implementation of Section 388, and to work on additional reforms to improve the hiring and retention of federal firefighters at our nation's military installations.